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FORD DEFENDS U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN FOREIGN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS
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Former President Gerald Ford said Friday he doubts the CIA aided political parties in El Salvador with cash, but said there is nothing wrong with U.S. government support of foreign political candidates.

Ford also criticized the World Court, which earlier this week ordered a halt to U.S. mining of Nicaraguan harbors, saying "you use it when you want it" and calling it a group of "high paid jurists who don't really do much."

The former Republican president made the comments at a \$25-per-plate fund-raising luncheon for GOP congressional candidate Richard Austin, who is facing freshman Democratic Rep. Richard Durbin in the November election.

Ford was scheduled to fly to Mount Vernon later for a fund-raising dinner for Republican Randy Patchett, who faces former Democratic Rep. Kenneth Gray in a Southern Illinois congressional district matchup.

Ford said he doubted the validity of reports that the CIA provided covert financial assistance to political parties opposing El Salvadoran right-wing candidate Roberto D'Aubuisson in last Sunday's presidential election.

The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this week that Jose Napoleon Duarte, the Christian Democrat Party candidate who won the election, was the major beneficiary of a \$2 million, two-year CIA financing plan.

"I don't know whether that's true or untrue. That's what the newspapers are saying and that's what D'Aubuisson is saying," Ford said. "I'm not sure Mr. D'Aubuisson is an objective commentator since he's the one that lost."

"I'm going to wait and see, but in my opinion if the United States' government is in favor of somebody, it certainly has a right to indicate who it favors in an election."

Ford also defended Reagan administration policies in Central America, saying one of the issues President Reagan must address in his re-election bid is the leadership role of the United States in relation to its allies and adversaries.

"I get the impression that these Democrats think Central America is way out in the Pacific someplace. Central America is on our doorstep," Ford told an audience of about 750 people.

"We need a president that is strong, firm and consistent."

He said the U.S. role in Central America was not to "overthrow" governments, but to provide military aid for stability and economic aid to promote democracy.

Concern about alleged human rights violations in El Salvador is justified, Ford said, but not to the point that it halts economic aid and "lets a country go down the drain."

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